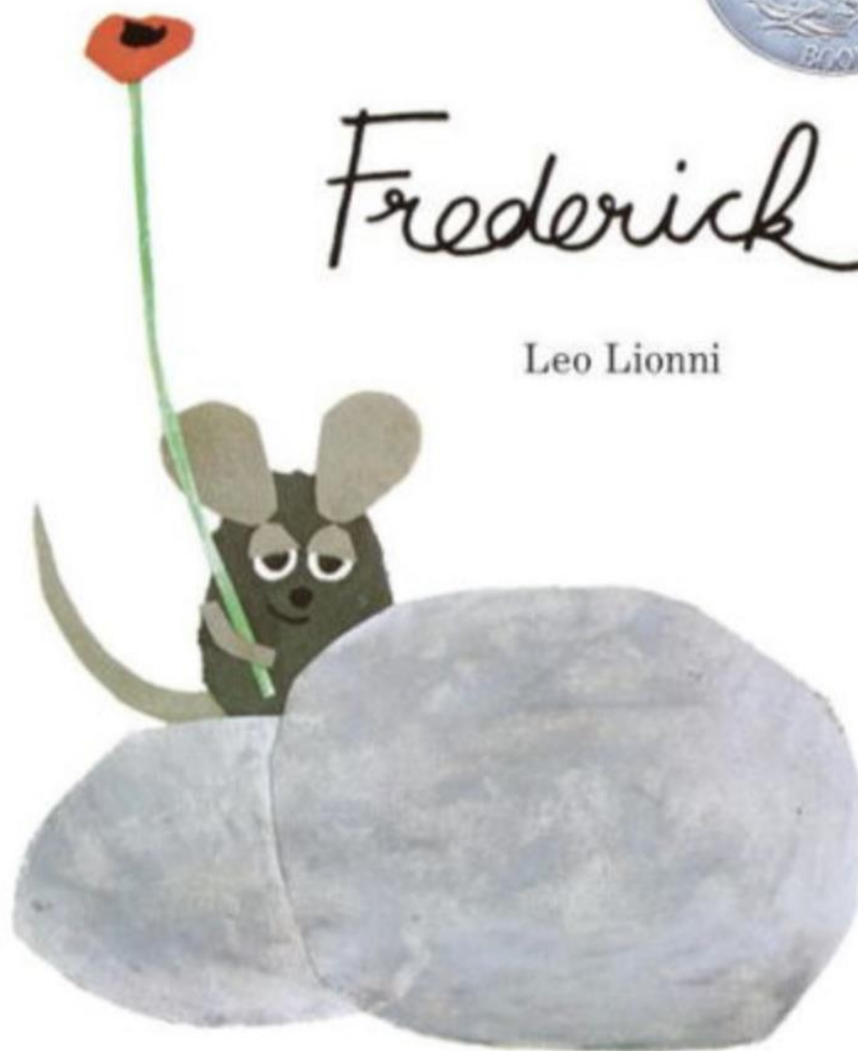




Frederick

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sointoart.org/fredrick

Classroom Curriculum

Summary

Frederick explores the nature of work and the importance of community. It also introduces the concept of collectivism.

Frederick is a dreamer. While all of the other mice scurry about and prepare for the long winter ahead, *Frederick* prepares in his own special way.

Guidelines for Philosophical Discussion

Frederick raises many philosophical questions. The nature of community and the social philosophy that governs community is just one. *Frederick*'s story appears to be sympathetic to collectivism, a term that describes any moral, political or social outlook that stresses human interdependence and the importance of a collective, rather than the importance of separate individuals. Early socialist and communist philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, inspired collectivists. Collectivists are concerned with community and society and seek to give priority to group goals over individual goals. They believe that a type of "social contract" exists in which the terms



of this contract are decided by the “general will” of the people. In the story, Frederick contributed to the mouse community in a different way than the other mice. Yet, did he violate the social contract by not also helping to gather food?

Frederick also poses questions about the nature of work. There are many arguments about what actions are considered to be work, and it is not clear-cut in our society what is considered work and what isn't. In the story, Frederick does not physically work, but still contributes to the mouse family. Is Frederick working? Karl Marx's labor theory of value suggests that the labor one does is only equal to its value in society. Use-value determines the value of goods produced. If the mice had not run out of food, Frederick's poetry might not have had any use-value. On the other hand, one might argue that Frederick's contribution was necessary. Perhaps poetry is unique and only valued for as much as one is willing to pay. If Frederick were a famous poet, would his poetry be more valuable? Again, the focus on community and the roles of people in their community are addressed. Part of Marx's socialist theory states that everyone would have to do some work to reap the benefits. Is it fair that Frederick gets to eat the food?



The social importance of art and the role of the artist in society are other topics addressed in the story. What was Frederick's role? Many poets debate these questions among themselves. Some focus on how much or why a poet is paid to write as essential to knowing the social function of poetry. Others say the content of poetry reflects its specific utility, or that the way a poem makes us feel and connects us to other human beings serves as its social function. Still, others argue that poetry's social function is to just be, that one can take what she wants from poetry. Thus, the importance of poetry, or any type of art, in our society is not clear. Frederick's contribution of poetry to the mouse family was useful, but many would argue that food and shelter are more important than art in regard to the family's survival.



Questions for Philosophical Discussion

The Nature of Community

"I am gathering words. For the winter days are long and many, and we'll run out of things to say."

1. What makes a community?
2. Try to think of some communities you are a part of.
How do you know they are communities?
3. Your school is a community, and everybody contributes something to it. The mice have a community, too, and everyone is contributing something. What and how do the mice contribute?
4. Does everybody have to do his or her part in a community?
5. What does Frederick contribute?
6. Frederick is a part of the mouse community. Does Frederick deserve to get some of the food even though he didn't gather any of it?
7. Do you think it's fair that he gets some of the food?
Why or why not?



The Nature of Work

"I do work," said Frederick. "I gather sun rays for the cold dark winter days."

1. Do you think Frederick is working?
2. When do you feel like you're working?
3. If you like something, is it still work?
4. Do you think going to school is work?
5. Is your favorite subject work? What about your least favorite subject?
6. Does work have to be hard? Why or why not?
7. What is the difference between work and play? Give an example of something you do that you think is work and something you think is play.
8. Do you have to be paid for working? Why or why not?
9. Some people play professional sports, and they get paid, are they working?
10. Do only adults work?
11. Does work have to be physical? Why or why not?
12. What can or can't be work?
13. Is thinking work?



The Value of Work

“What about your supplies, Frederick?”

1. What makes a type of work important?
2. Do you think Frederick’s work was worth as much as the other mice’s work? Why or why not?
3. If something is not important or not as important, does that mean it’s not work?
4. Can they both be equally important, but in different ways? What are the differences?
5. What would have happened to the mice if Frederick hadn’t written poetry?



The Nature of Poetry

“But Frederick,” they said, “you are a poet!”

1. Do you like poetry? How about Frederick’s poem?

Why or why not?

2. Why do people write poetry?

3. Is being a poet a job? Why or why not?

4. Is poetry work or play? Why?

5. Do people need poetry? Is it important? Why or why not?

6. Was having poetry as important as having food for the mice? What about for people? Why or why not?

7. Why is it important for people to have art such as paintings, poetry, and music? Do these things help people in hard times?



Activity

Reader Anne Macvean from Melbourne, Australia, submitted this follow-up activity for *Frederick* based on her work at the Deutsche Schulz Melbourne:

1. After the 5- to 7-year-old to whom *Frederick* was read discussed the questions about community, they were asked to think about and give a few examples of what people in their school community contribute. The children were then asked to complete a table with the names of each person in the community and their contributions. The children who could not yet write would draw pictures, for which the teacher added descriptions (as dictated by them). This concrete representation of our discussion could be a basis for future sessions. The children might further consider ideas about the contributions that different people make to their community. Some ideas are the value of different contributions, sharing resources within their community, and what it means to them to be a part of their school community.



Activity Suggestion

The field mice go to live in the cave during winter. While in the cave, the mice run out of food and Frederick uses the art of poetry to help pass the days. Now it is your turn to create your own suitcase for the winter. Think of four things that you would bring to survive the winter that resembles the field mice's supplies, and one or two things like Frederick's. Draw pictures that represent what you think are the most important things you will need to survive a long winter. Make sure to be very thoughtful and careful in your selection because you will have to explain why you picked each item.

